

MAY 30, 1978

ART TREASURES OF THE EAST BUILDING  
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

GREAT MUSEUMS AND ART GALLERIES HAVE USUALLY GROWN SLOWLY, EXPANDING AS ADDED ACQUISITIONS REQUIRED NEW SPACES. BUT, HERE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. A NEW, AND ARCHITECTURALLY SPLENDID, BUILDING WILL OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (ON JUNE 1) WITH ITS GALLERIES, LARGE AND SMALL, FILLED WITH ART TREASURES FROM EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES, COVERING A PERIOD OF SOME 600 YEARS. IT IS THE NEW EAST BUILDING OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART (OPT) AND ITS OPENING-UP IS LIKE A MAGNIFICENT SUNBURST IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL, OR, IN THE WORDS OF THE GALLERY'S ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CHARLES PARKHURST, LIKE ATHENA, SPRINGING FULL-FORMED FROM THE HEAD OF ZEUS, IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY. (END OPT/ VOA'S BRIGID LAY ASKED ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CHARLES PARKHURST TO POINT OUT SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VARIOUS COLLECTIONS PRESENTLY HOUSED IN THE NEW EAST BUILDING, AND HERE IS HER REPORT.

VOICE:

HERE, ON THE MALL, THAT BROAD STRETCH OF GREEN, TREE-SHADED TURF THAT SWEEPS FROM THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL BUILDING TO THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT, (OPT) STANDS THE HANDSOME, NEO-CLASSIC BUILDING OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, EXTENDED BY TWO AMPLE WINGS AND CAPPED BY A STATELY DOME. TO ONE SIDE, ACROSS A PAVED PLAZA, IS AN EDIFICE OF VERTICAL LINES, WITH SET-BACKS AND GLASS WALLS AND CUNNINGLY CONTRIVED ANGLES THAT INTRIGUES THE EYE FROM EVERY ASPECT. (END OPT) WE ARE IN FRONT OF THE GALLERY'S EAST BUILDING AND CHARLES PARKHURST IS OUR GUIDE TO ITS TREASURES..

TAPE: CUT ONE -- PARKHURST

"THE OUTSIDE IS ADORNED BY A GREAT HENRY MOORE WHICH IS, PERHAPS, THE LARGEST PIECE HE HAS EVER DONE, AND IT LOOKS SPLENDID IN ITS GOLDEN COLOR, IN THE SUN, AGAINST THE MARBLE FACADE. WHEN YOU GO INSIDE -- AND FROM THE OUTSIDE YOU CANNOT ANTICIPATE THE INTERIOR, OUTSIDE IT'S LIKE A PIECE OF MODERN HARD-EDGE SCULPTURE ON A GREAT SCALE -- WHEN YOU GO INSIDE, IT'S WARM AND ROUND AND SOFT, AN ABSOLUTELY AMAZING TRANSFORMATION. AND IN THAT SPACE THE VOLUME OF IT IS DESCRIBED, YOU MIGHT SAY, BY THE SWINGING OF A HUGE CALDER MOBILE -- IN HIS USUAL COLORS, BLACK AND RED AND BLUE -- BUT IT'S ALMOST 87 FEET (26.5 METERS) ACROSS AND ABOUT 80 FEET (24 METERS) UP IN THE AIR. AND IT MOVES JUST IN THE DRAFTS OF THE AIR CONDITIONING; AND IT MOVES ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, AND IT STOPS AND IT STARTS AND IT'S VERY INTERESTING THE WAY IT CASTS SHADOWS. (OPT) IT HAD TO BE MADE SPECIALLY; OBVIOUSLY, A STEEL SCULPTURE THAT HUGE WOULD HAVE PULLED THE ROOF DOWN, AND, SO, IT'S VERY CAREFULLY ENGINEERED OF HONEYCOMB ALUMINUM, WITH A SURFACE OF METAL, AND IT LOOKS LIKE GREAT STEEL PLATES BUT ACTUALLY IT IS NOT." (END OPT)

VOICE:

THE GREAT INNER FOYER WHICH SOARS UPWARD TO A SKYLIT ROOF IS GRACED BY ANOTHER MONUMENTAL SCULPTURE IN THE MODERN MANNER.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- PARKHURST

"ON A LEDGE SITS PERCHED -- LIKE A BIRD, PERHAPS -- IS A SCULPTURE BY ANTHONY CARO, ANOTHER ENGLISH SCULPTOR, WHICH ACTUALLY COULD NOT BE DONE ANYWHERE ELSE BUT RIGHT THERE AND SO HE BUILT IT IN PLACE. MIRO DID A HUGE TAPESTRY JUST FOR THAT INTERIOR; IT IS NEARLY 40 FEET (12 METERS) HIGH; IT EXPANDS; IT'S LIKE A STAINED GLASS WINDOW, AS IT WERE, PERMANENTLY LIT, AND THE COLOR IS VISIBLE, IN PARTS AND SOMETIMES ENTIRELY, FROM DOZENS OF PLACES IN THIS VAST INTERIOR."

VOICE:

(OPT) AMONG THE OTHER WORKS THAT DECORATE THE CENTRAL SPACE IS A HUGE CANVAS BY AMERICAN PAINTER, ROBERT MOTHERWELL, ALSO SCULPTURES BY AMERICAN MID-CENTURY ARTIST, DAVID SMITH, AND, IN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT STYLE, BUT LOOKING QUITE AT HOME AMIDST ALL THE MODERNITY, A FEMALE FIGURE BY THE FRENCH SCULPTURE MAILLOL.

THE ART GALLERIES ARE IN THREE BUILDING, LIKE TOWERS, THAT MARK THE ANGLES OF THE TRIANGULAR PLOT IN WHICH THIS PART OF THE EAST BUILDING STANDS . THEY ARE OF DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES, SOME WITH ADJUSTABLE AND SOME WITH FIXED CEILINGS, TO ACCOMODATE ART OF ANY SIZE. FOR INSTANCE, THE AILSA MELLON BRUCE COLLECTION OF SMALL IMPRESSIONIST PAINTINGS...

TAPE: CUT THREE -- PARKHURST

"NONE OF THESE PICTURES IS MUCH LARGER THAN A POSTCARD, OR, AT BEST, A SHEET OF WRITING PAPER, AND THEY LOOK VERY COMFORTABLE IN SIX SMALL GALLERIES UNDER A LOW CEILING, ARTFULLY LIT AND BEAUTIFULLY DISPLAYED."

VOICE:

IN ANOTHER SERIES OF SMALL GALLERIES ARE 500 YEARS OF DRAWINGS, PRINTS AND WATER COLORS, DATING FROM THE YEAR 1300 TO THE PRESENT TIME. THEN, ON THE TOP FLOOR, IS A 35 FOOT (10½ METER) HIGH GALLERY, STEPPED UP LIKE AN AMPHITHEATER, TO DISPLAY SCULPTURES BY DAVID SMITH WHICH WERE ACTUALLY MADE TO BE SEEN IN THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATER IN SPOLETO, ITALY.

TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPEAN ART IS REPRESENTED BY A THREE-PART INSTALLATION PRESENTING A SURVEY OF MAJOR STYLES AND ARTISTS FROM PICASSO AND CUBISM TO THE LATE WORK -- THE PAPER CUT-OUTS -- OF HENRI MATISSE. AMERICAN ARTISTS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY ARE REPRESENTED BY SEVEN MAJOR PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS, INCLUDING WILLEM DE KOONING, JACKSON POLLACK, ARSHILE GORKY AND MARK ROTHKO...AND, OF COURSE, DAVID SMITH. (OPT) SOME OF THESE ART OBJECTS ARE DRAWN FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY'S PERMAMENT COLLECTIONS, OTHERS ARE ON LOAN. (END OPT) BUT BY FAR THE MOST SPECTULAR EXHIBITION IN THE NEW EAST BUILDING COMES FROM THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC. IT IS CALLED "THE SPLENDOR OF DRESDEN." IT COMPRISES SOME 700 OBJECTS AND, AS MR. PARKHURSE EXPLAINS, IT IS MORE THAN JUST A COLLECTION OF ARTIFACTS AND ARTWORKS,

GORGEOUS AS THEY ARE IN THEIR OWN RIGHT. IT TELLS A STORY -- HOW MUSEUMS DEVELOPED FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTIONS OF GREAT PATRONS OF ART...

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- PARKHURST

"AMONG ALL THE CITIES IN THE WORLD, I THINK, DRESDEN IS, BY VIRTUE OF ITS ELEVEN STATE MUSEUMS, THE BEST QUALIFIED TO DEMONSTRATE HOW MUSEUMS DEVELOPED, BECAUSE THEY STILL HAVE ALL OF THEIR HISTORIC MUSEUMS...THE KUNSTKAMMER (ART ROOMS) OF THE ELECTORS OF SAXONY OF THE 16TH CENTURY WHICH WERE LIKE A SMORGASBORD (MIXTURE) OF ART, DISPLAYED ON BOOKSHELVES, SO TO SPEAK, HUNG ON WALLS OF THESE paneled ROOMS OF THE PERIOD, PLACED ON TABLES, SOMEWHAT HELTER SKLTER, PERHAPS BUT NONETHELESS, LOVINGLY PRESERVED IN THIS WAY. AND IT IS QUITE A DELIGHT TO GO INTO ONE OF THESE ROOMS FULL OF EVERY SORT OF THING, FROM DEFORMED DEER ANTLERS TO NARWHALE HORNS, PAINTINGS ON THE WALL, BOOKS, SILVER CHALICES, EVERYTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE, DRAWINGS, PRINTS AND SO ON ... THAT IS THE FIRST MANIFESTATION."

VOICE:

THE NEXT STAGE WAS THE ARMORY, THE REPOSITORY FOR THE MAGNIFICENT ARMOR AND WEAPONS, USED FOR PAGEANTS, PARADES, JOUSTING AND THE HUNT. THE METALWORK IN THE EXHIBITION -- THE CHASED AND ORNAMENTED STEEL, SILVER AND GOLD, IS EXQUISITELY BEAUTIFUL BUT IT IS TOPPED IN MAGNIFICENCE BY THE CONTENTS OF THE TREASURE VAULTS -- KNOWN AS THE GREEN VAULTS -- DATING FROM THE LATE 16TH CENTURY.

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- PARKHURST

"THEY KEPT ALL THEIR GREATEST TREASURES (THERE) -- THE DIAMONDS, THE BUTTONS WHICH WERE HUGE ROSECUT DIAMONDS, AND SO ON, THROUGH THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURY, WHEN IT WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND BECAME A MUSEUM IN ITS OWN RIGHT. THAT IS NOT DUPLICATED BUT IS SIMULATED, WITH THE GREEN WALLS, THE BEAUTIFUL BAROQUE PANELING ON THE WALLS, THE VAULTED CEILINGS AND THIS UNBELIEVABLE SPARKLE AND GLITTER OF GOLD, SILVER, ENAMEL, AND YOU NAME IT BUT IT'S ALL THERE."

VOICE:

ALL -- AND MORE TO COME, AS THE GALLERIES FOLLOW A CHRONOLOGICAL COURSE THAT LEADS US DOWN TO THE PRESENT DAY: THE FINEST OLD MASTER PAINTINGS, RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE

BRONZES, OBJECTS OF ROCK CRYSTAL, PEARL, AND CORAL, MOUNTED IN PRECIOUS METALS, RARE ORIENTAL PROCELAINS AND EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLES FROM THE FAMED MEISSEN MANUFACTORY WHERE THE ART OF PORCELAIN-MAKING WAS REDISCOVERED BY WESTERN CRAFTSMEN.

AND SO TO THE PAINTERS AND PRINTMAKERS OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES.

NOW, WITH EYES BEDAZZLED BY THE SPLENDORS OF THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF ART AND CRAFTSMANSHIP, PRESERVED IN THE HISTORIC MUSEUMS OF THE CITY OF DRESDEN, WE END OUR JOURNEY THROUGH CENTURIES PAST AND, AS THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY, CHARLES PARKHURST, REMARKS..

TAPE CUT SIX PARKHURST

"OF COURSE, WHEN YOU EMERGE, YOU'RE IN THE MOST RECENT MUSEUM OF ALL, THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S EAST BUILDING...SO THERE YOU HAVE THE WHOLE HISTORY OF MUSEUMS WRAPPED UP IN DRESDEN AND YOU EMERGE INTO THE LATEST VERSION WHICH IS OUR OWN BUILDING ... IT'S RATHER NICE."

VOICE:

"RATHER NICE" PROBABLY QUALIFIES AS THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY BUT WE HAVE EXHAUSTED OUR STOCK OF SUPERLATIVES SO WE WILL LEAVE IT UP TO THE MANY THOUSAND OF VISITORS WHO ARE EXPECTED AT THE EAST BUILDING THIS SUMMER TO ADD THEIR OWN WORDS OF PRAISE FOR THE NATIONAL GALLERY'S NEW ART MUSEUM AND ITS MANY TREASURES.

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